(a) whether it is a fact that Government had granted permission to a large number of dental colleges to conduct post-graduate courses in surgery bypassing or disregarding the views of Dental Council of India;

(b) if so, what are the number of such Dental Colleges which have been given permission for post-graduate courses in surgery;

(c) whether it is also a fact that recommendations of Dental Council of India is necessary for admission of students in dental colleges, including post-graduate courses in dental surgery; and

(d) if so, under which rule Government has flouted this mandatory provision?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS): (a) to (d) In terms of Section 10 A (2) (a) of the Dentists (Amendment) Act, 1993, it is mandatory for the Central Government to forward each scheme/application of the Dental Colleges for starting post graduate courses to the DCI for its recommendations. However, Section 10 A (4) gives final powers to the Central Government to consider the recommendations of the Council and take decision either to approve or disapprove the scheme after considering the scheme, recommendations of the DCI and additional information, if any.

Therefore, the recommendations of the Dental Council of India (DCI) are not final but recommendatory in nature and it is for the Central Government to take a final view in the matter and, where necessary, collect additional information by way of various methods including inspection etc. before arriving at a final decision.

Accordingly, in order to verify the compliance reports submitted by dental colleges *vis-a-vis* the negative recommendations of the DCI, the Central Government sent the Central Inspection Teams in 22 dental colleges. However, the Central Government granted permission to 17 dental colleges only in those specialities in which they fulfilled the eligibility criteria for starting the MDS courses.

Contaminated drinking water

*114. SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of the increasing health hazards posed by unsafe/contaminated drinking water with high levels of heavy metals and pesticides used by farmers in many cities and States; and

(b) if so, the steps Government proposes to take to address this issue?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS): (a) and (b) Consumption of contaminated water is a health hazard. Prolonged use of water contaminated with arsenic for drinking causes diseases like dermatosis, keratosis, conjunctivitis, bronchitis, gastro-enteritis in the initial stage and peripheral neuropathis, hepatopathis melanosis, de-pigmentation and hyper-keratosis, The effect of excessive amount of fluoride on human body is dental molting, skeletal and crippling fluorosis. Heavy metals like lead may cause irreversible brain damage, seizure coma, fatigue, irritability etc. and repeated prolonged exposure to mercury can result in severe disturbances in central nervous system, kidneys, liver etc.

As per available information, ground water in major parts of the country is by and large potable. There are, however, areas which have poor quality of ground water mainly due to contamination from water bearing rocks, excessive use of fertilizers, industrial and domestic effluents, mining wastes, saline water ingress etc.

The health hazards due to consumption of contaminated water can be combated by supply of safe drinking water. Water, being a State subject, it is primarily the responsibility of State Governments to check ground water pollution. However, the Union Government has also taken following measures to tackle the problem of water pollution.

- Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission, under the Ministry of Rural Development has been assisting and guiding the States in provision of safe drinking water to the rural population under Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP). One of the objectives is to preserve quality of water by institutionalizing water quality-monitoring and surveillance. In areas, where ground water is unfit for drinking, safe drinking water is supplied either through alternative sources or by undertaking remedial measures like de-fluoridation, iron-removal and arsenic-removal.
- Ministry of Rural Development, Department of Drinking Water Supply, has constituted a National Rural Drinking Water Quality Advisory Committee in March, 2006. The terms of reference for the advisory committee include, *inter alia*,
  - Identifying innovative approaches, best practices and possible Research & Development gaps for improving the quality of the National Rural Drinking Water Quality monitoring and Surveillance programme.
  - To provide suggestions for implementation of Sub-Mission programme for tackling water quality of drinking water.
- The Policy Statement for Abatement of Pollution issued by Ministry of Environment & Forests in February, 1992, recognizes the need for reducing hazards from water polluted with toxic chemicals.
  - The Policy Statement also emphasizes the need for addressing pollution of water from run-off of agricultural inputs such as pesticides, insecticides, fertilizers etc.
  - The Policy Statement recommends a long term policy for pesticides use, including the introduction of environmentally acceptable pesticides particularly bio-pesticides and non-persistent bio-degradable ones, and integrated pest management together with the phasing out of the proven harmful toxic and persistent ones to be implemented in collaboration with the concerned Ministries.
- The plan of action formulated for operationalization of National Policy for Farmers, 2007, States that development, introduction and diffusion of environmentally safe and effective pesticides will be given priority.
- A National Programme on Prevention and Control of Fluorosis has also been approved to address the issue of fluoride content in drinking water.
- Mass awareness and education programme have been launched on the significance of water economy, health, hygiene and sanitation.